

SENATE, No. 2517

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 28, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator STEPHEN M. SWEENEY

District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

Senator LORETTA WEINBERG

District 37 (Bergen)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Addiego, Diegnan, Greenstein and Ruiz

SYNOPSIS

Establishes program to adopt paratransit best practices, requires greater coordination among paratransit service providers, and establishes regional paratransit coordinating councils; appropriates \$6 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 8/27/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning paratransit services, the establishment of
2 regional paratransit coordinating councils, supplementing Title
3 27 and Title 30 of the Revised Statutes, and making an
4 appropriation.

5
6 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
7 *of New Jersey:*

8
9 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Paratransit
10 Services Improvement Act.”

11
12 2. The Legislature hereby finds and declares:

13 The current system for paratransit services is fragmented and
14 includes various providers from different levels of government as
15 well as from private enterprise in different regions, counties, and
16 service areas. The ultimate impact of the current system is poor
17 service, including but not limited to long trip times and poor
18 communication of trip status, and high costs.

19 Access Link, which is a program administered by the New Jersey
20 Transit Corporation that was established to enable the State to meet
21 the minimum standards of the federal “Americans with Disabilities
22 Act of 1990” (42 U.S.C. s.12101 et seq.), provides the majority of
23 paratransit trips in the State. The Access Link Program, which has
24 a very high per trip cost, should serve as a safety net for paratransit
25 within the State, not as the primary provider of paratransit services
26 within the State as is currently the case. Community organizations
27 that provide paratransit services for individuals with developmental
28 disabilities have provided evidence to the Legislature that certain
29 paratransit services may be provided that are objectively safer, have
30 shorter average trip times, and cost less per passenger mile. The
31 average cost per trip for Access Link trips is, in many cases, triple
32 the cost of similar paratransit services. Accordingly, it should be an
33 objective of the State to direct service for regular and recurring
34 paratransit trips away from Access Link, where possible, and
35 toward other providers, including those funded through the
36 Department of Human Services and the Division of Vocational
37 Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Labor and
38 Workforce Development, to both improve the quality of service and
39 reduce costs, effectively using Access Link as a paratransit provider
40 of last resort.

41 In addition to Access Link, county transit providers provide
42 paratransit services to senior citizens and individuals with
43 disabilities. The level of service available varies widely from
44 county to county and the source of State funding for these services,
45 the Casino Revenue Fund, has experienced reduced revenues in
46 recent years. Furthermore, organizations at the county level have
47 been charged by the New Jersey Transit Corporation with

1 developing local coordination transportation plans within each
2 county but often lack knowledge of best practices, do not coordinate
3 regionally, and many organizations do not have common platforms
4 or systems for requesting, sharing, and completing trips.

5 Direct administrative connections and coordination between
6 agencies and organizations that provide programs and services for
7 disabled persons, generally, and transit agencies that provide transit
8 trips for those individuals would assist the State in improving the
9 quality of service and reducing State costs.

10 Building these relationships will help the State, community
11 organizations, and transit agencies develop best practices for
12 providing paratransit services, which will lead to additional
13 improvements in the quality of services and additional reductions in
14 costs.

15 The current system is insufficient to meet the needs of persons
16 with disabilities in the State, including the use of routing software
17 that has proven to be wholly inadequate to serve the special needs
18 of the disabled community.

19 It is essential that the State improve coordination, share best
20 practices, advance proven models, and improve the efficiency of the
21 system.

22

23 3. For the purposes of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
24 the Legislature as this bill):

25 “Community organization” means an organization that provides
26 programs and services to persons with disabilities.

27 “County transit agency” means a transportation service
28 organized under or in conjunction with a county government to
29 provide trips to senior citizens and residents with disabilities under
30 the "Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation
31 Assistance Act," P.L.1983, c.578 (C.27:25-25 et seq.).

32 “Division” means, unless another meaning clearly applies, the
33 Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of
34 Human Services.

35 “Paratransit provider” means any organization or entity that
36 provides paratransit services, including State and local transit
37 agencies, directly or through contract service, and community
38 organizations that provide transportation trips, either directly or
39 through a third party, funded by the Department of Human Services
40 or the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services within the
41 Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

42 “Paratransit service” means and includes any transportation
43 service other than fixed route transportation service, except that.
44 “paratransit service” does not include private or charter services
45 provided by taxicabs, limousines, or transportation network
46 companies.

1 4. The corporation shall ensure that all paratransit service that
2 it directly manages, administers, or supports financially, including
3 but not limited to Access Link service, shall adhere to the following
4 standards:

5 a. All paratransit providers shall implement an open software
6 platform such that the customer's user-interface and the trip
7 planning software can interact with the platforms of other
8 paratransit providers, allowing a trip requested by a customer via
9 the user interface to be fulfilled by a paratransit provider that
10 chooses to utilize a compatible platform without any additional
11 action on the part of the customer. Specifically, the open software
12 platform shall be interoperable with software developed pursuant to
13 subparagraph (1) of subsection b. of section 5 of
14 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

15 b. The corporation shall structure the Access Link program as a
16 service of last resort. In structuring the program in this way, the
17 corporation shall: (1) actively develop a methodology whereby
18 customer trips can be tracked, and identify any trips requested by
19 customers that are regular and recurring in nature; (2) track and
20 document these regular and recurring trips by pickup location,
21 source of the request such as by phone, website, or mobile
22 application, and relevant regular or recurring characteristics, such
23 as, but not limited to, daily, weekly, monthly intervals, or several
24 trips from a single source or to a single destination; (3) make
25 information about these regular and recurring trips available to
26 other paratransit providers in the State, including county transit
27 agencies and community organizations that provide transportation
28 service, either directly or through a third party, funded by the
29 Department of Human Services or the Division of Vocational
30 Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Labor and
31 Workforce Development; (4) develop a system that allows county
32 transit agencies and community organizations that provide
33 paratransit service to compete to conduct these regular and
34 recurring trips, which would have otherwise been provided under
35 the Access Link program, by establishing a new Access Link
36 program structure where the corporation is able to realize contract
37 or operating cost savings when it shifts requested regular and
38 routine trips from the primary Access Link provider to a paratransit
39 provider that is able to provide these trips at a lower cost; (5)
40 develop a system that provides a payment equal to a portion of the
41 savings from the shifting of trips in paragraph (4) of this subsection
42 to the paratransit provider that provides the trips in place of the
43 Access link provider; and (6) shift trips out of the Access Link
44 program entirely, and to other State agencies or entities if it is found
45 that a regular and recurring trip requested through the Access Link
46 program is better provided under a different program through the
47 Department of Human Services or the Department of Labor and

1 Workforce Development, especially those trip requests that would
2 not otherwise be eligible to be provided under the Access Link
3 program.

4 c. Following the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.)
5 (pending before the Legislature as this bill), the corporation shall
6 not enter into any contract, or exercise any option to extend an
7 existing contract, concerning the provision of Access Link service
8 unless the contract or option includes a provision that the fixed
9 costs of the contract or option shall be proportionately reduced to
10 reflect any reduction in the provision of regular and recurring trips
11 provided by the contractor that are subsequently fulfilled by another
12 paratransit provider. The corporation shall establish minimum
13 operating standards for any paratransit provider that may wish to
14 participate in this program to ensure that all applicable federal
15 standards are met by the paratransit provider and that adequate
16 safeguards are provided to customers.

17 d. The corporation shall utilize the paratransit best practices
18 training module developed pursuant to subsection b. of section 5 of
19 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) in
20 meeting the requirements of this section. The corporation, when
21 establishing the open software platform, required pursuant to
22 subsection a. of this section, shall ensure that the platform is
23 affordable for the corporation to adopt and easily implemented by
24 the various paratransit providers that will utilize the software
25 platform.

26

27 5. a. (1) The Division of Developmental Disabilities within
28 the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the New
29 Jersey Transit Corporation, shall develop and implement a
30 paratransit best practices pilot program.

31 (2) The division, in consultation with the New Jersey Transit
32 Corporation, shall select a qualified community organization to
33 assist it in developing and implementing the pilot program. The
34 qualified community organization shall meet the following criteria:

35 (a) the organization shall operate a facility that provides
36 services to persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities;

37 (b) the organization shall directly provide paratransit services to
38 persons with disabilities with those services paid, in whole or in
39 part, by funds received from the Department of Human Services and
40 the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services within the
41 Department of Labor and Workforce Development;

42 (c) within the previous five years, the organization has received
43 a Federal Transit Administration grant awarded by and administered
44 through the New Jersey Transit Corporation for improvement to
45 paratransit services;

46 (d) during the previous five-year period, the organization has
47 demonstrated improvement in key performance metrics, including

1 average trip time, vehicle accidents, and cost per passenger mile for
2 paratransit services; and

3 (e) the organization provides transportation trips on a sufficient
4 scale, including at least 250 daily trips under normal operating
5 conditions.

6 b. Phase one of the pilot program shall include the following:

7 A training module for paratransit best practices shall be
8 developed jointly by the qualified community organization and the
9 New Jersey Transit Corporation and subject to approval by the
10 division. The training module shall include: (1) an integrated
11 paratransit software package that includes trip generation and
12 scheduling, GPS directions for drivers, a mobile application for
13 users that allows for trip requests, confirmation of trip requests, and
14 trip status updates, and a trip accounting system; (2) a driver safety
15 system that includes dashboard cameras, incident monitoring, and
16 driver training; (3) assistance in hiring staff if necessary to fully
17 implement the transportation system and train existing staff in the
18 use of new technologies and business processes; (4) a curriculum
19 that educates agencies about fleet management and specialized
20 driver training for the needs of paratransit users; (5) personalized
21 agency culture training; and (6) agency training on how to develop
22 synergies between optimal transportation practices and the other
23 programmatic needs of paratransit providers who provide
24 transportation trips funded by the Department of Human Services.

25 c. Phase two of the pilot program shall include the following:

26 The division shall establish an application process where up to
27 five paratransit providers that provide transportation trips directly
28 funded by the Department of Human Services or the Division of
29 Vocational Rehabilitation Services within the Department of Labor
30 and Workforce Development are selected by the division, in
31 consultation with the qualified community organization, to receive
32 training in paratransit best practices from the qualified community
33 organization. When selecting service providers to receive training,
34 the division shall consider the cost for the paratransit provider to
35 adopt these best practices, which may include but is not necessarily
36 limited to the acquisition of new software, hiring of staff, and any
37 necessary changes in vehicle fleet composition as well as potential
38 savings that the paratransit provider will be likely to realize from
39 reducing average trip time, vehicle accidents, and cost per
40 passenger mile by adopting these best practices and the likelihood
41 that those savings could self-fund the adoption of the best practices.
42 Any paratransit providers selected to participate in the pilot
43 program shall receive training from the qualified community
44 organization.

45 d. Phase three of the pilot program shall include the following:

46 (1) If the efficiencies realized by the paratransit providers that
47 received training in phase two are sufficient to justify widespread

1 adoption, then the division and corporation, in consultation with the
2 qualified community organization, shall expand the training
3 program by further developing the module into a best practices
4 training package designed in a manner that allows a paratransit
5 provider to independently adopt the best practices and software on
6 its own, or in conjunction with assistance provided generally
7 through the paratransit coordinating councils established in
8 accordance with section 6 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
9 the Legislature as this bill). It is intended that this phase three
10 training module shall allow for the eventual integration of
11 paratransit services throughout the State. Integration of paratransit
12 services shall mean the widespread adoption of the software
13 developed pursuant to phase one of the pilot program, or similarly
14 compatible software, so that requested trips by customers may be
15 fulfilled, if possible, by any applicable paratransit provider, and that
16 paratransit providers shall meet the minimum operating standards
17 established by the New Jersey Transit Corporation so that those
18 paratransit providers may compete for regular and routine Access
19 Link trips under the revised Access Link program as described in
20 section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
21 as this bill).

22 If the efficiencies realized in phase two do not justify expansion
23 of the training program further, then the division and corporation, in
24 consultation with the qualified community organization, shall
25 determine an alternate method of integrating paratransit services
26 throughout the State in a manner that allows paratransit providers
27 that meet minimum operating standards to compete for regular and
28 routine Access Link trips under the revised Access Link program as
29 described in section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
30 Legislature as this bill).

31 (2) The regional paratransit coordinating councils shall be
32 established in accordance with section 6 of P.L. , c. (C.)
33 (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

34 e. The New Jersey Transit Corporation shall utilize the
35 complete paratransit best practices training module, including the
36 associated software, when making changes to its paratransit service
37 and the Access Link program to comply with the requirements of
38 section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
39 as this bill).

40 f. (1) The New Jersey Transit Corporation shall enter into a
41 contract with the qualified community organization that
42 compensates the qualified community organization for its costs in
43 developing the paratransit best practices training module as required
44 for phase one of the pilot program as established in subsection b. of
45 this section, and providing the training module as a publicly
46 available resource that can be utilized by other paratransit providers
47 in the State and used by the corporation for its own paratransit

1 services. If phases one and two of the pilot program are determined
2 to be successful, the corporation shall also enter into a contract with
3 the qualified community organization to further develop the training
4 module into a self-administered best practices training package as
5 required for phase three of the pilot program in subsection d. of this
6 section. The self-administered best practices training package shall
7 also be a publicly available resource that can be utilized by other
8 paratransit providers in the State and by the corporation for its own
9 paratransit services.

10 (2) The division shall enter into a contract with the qualified
11 community organization for the actual training of agencies under
12 the pilot program, which shall include performance standards as the
13 division shall deem appropriate to ensure that the agencies being
14 trained are adequately prepared to implement safer, more efficient,
15 user friendly, and customer-focused transportation services.

16 (3) To the extent possible, the division shall require paratransit
17 providers being trained under the program to first utilize operating
18 savings resulting from adoption of the paratransit best practices
19 training pilot program to fund the costs of software, staff, and
20 equipment that may be required under the program, and limiting the
21 overall costs of the program.

22

23 6. a. There is hereby established within the Department of
24 Human Services six separate regional paratransit coordinating
25 councils. The regional paratransit coordinating councils shall be
26 organized as follows:

27 (1) one council shall cover the counties of Atlantic, Cape May,
28 Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem;

29 (2) one council shall cover the counties of Burlington, Camden,
30 and Ocean;

31 (3) one council shall cover the counties of Mercer, Middlesex,
32 and Monmouth;

33 (4) one council shall cover the counties of Hunterdon, Sussex,
34 and Warren;

35 (5) one council shall cover the counties of Essex, Morris,
36 Somerset, and Union; and

37 (6) one council shall cover the counties of Bergen, Hudson, and
38 Passaic.

39 b. Each regional paratransit coordinating council shall have the
40 following members:

41 (1) one designee of the Director of the Division of
42 Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services;

43 (2) one designee of the New Jersey Transit Corporation who
44 works on the Access Link program or the Senior Citizen and
45 Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program;

1 (3) one representative of any company or entity that has
2 contracted with the New Jersey Transit Corporation to provide
3 Access Link paratransit service within the region;

4 (4) one representative of each county within the respective
5 region to be chosen by the county executive director or by the board
6 of freeholders, as applicable;

7 (5) one representative of each county transportation agency or
8 other comparable entity within the respective region that provides
9 paratransit service for a county under the Senior Citizen and
10 Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program;

11 (6) one representative from each county chapter of the Arc of
12 New Jersey within the respective region;

13 (7) one individual that represents one or more members of the
14 Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities within the
15 respective region;

16 (8) one representative of Community Access Unlimited within
17 the respective region;

18 (9) one representative of the New Jersey Association of
19 Community Providers within the respective region; and

20 (10) up to three additional appointees of the Director of the
21 Division of Developmental Disabilities to represent paratransit
22 providers within the region that provide the most passenger trips to
23 persons with disabilities.

24 c. Each agency with an eligible representative of a regional
25 paratransit coordinating council provided in subsection b. of this
26 section shall submit information in a form and manner determined
27 by the Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities to the
28 director not later than 30 days following the enactment of P.L. , c.
29 (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) and on or
30 before January 1 of each year thereafter identifying the name and
31 contact information for the person to represent each respective
32 agency. The term for each member on the regional paratransit
33 coordinating council shall be one year provided, however, that any
34 member may be selected to serve on the council for subsequent
35 terms at the discretion of the respective agency. The director may
36 appoint one member of each regional paratransit coordinating
37 council to serve as the chair of that council.

38 d. Each regional paratransit coordinating council shall meet not
39 less than quarterly, with the first meeting happening not less than 60
40 days following the enactment of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
41 before the Legislature as this bill). The chair, in consultation with
42 the other members of the council, shall set meeting dates and shall
43 lead the coordination effort. The members shall serve without
44 compensation but may be reimbursed by the division for reasonable
45 expenses incurred in the execution of their duties.

46 e. The purpose of the regional paratransit coordinating councils
47 is to exchange best practices among paratransit providers within the

1 State. Those best practices shall include but are not limited to
2 scheduling and routing, fleet maintenance, driver training, customer
3 communications, safety practices, and improving the customer
4 usability experience. The councils are also to establish a system to
5 exchange information among and between paratransit providers and
6 eventually open platform standards so that: (1) each paratransit
7 provider may provide basic information to its customers about other
8 paratransit service options within each respective region; (2)
9 paratransit providers may eventually share customer trip requests
10 amongst each other; and (3) a single platform may eventually be
11 developed that enables a paratransit user to visit a single platform or
12 place to request a trip, and that trip may be distributed amongst the
13 paratransit providers in a manner that optimizes State cost and
14 customer experience. The councils shall also exchange budget
15 information and investigate more efficient means of organizing the
16 New Jersey Transit Corporation's expenditures for paratransit
17 services, use of State casino revenue funds, and appropriations for
18 the division related to paratransit services, for the purpose of
19 coordinating these three respective funding pools to eliminate any
20 duplicative funding, and to direct trips and funding to service
21 providers that offer the highest quality service and overall best
22 value.

23 f. The county plans required under section 6 of P.L.1983,
24 c.578 (C.27:25-30) and any committees or groups organized to
25 effectuate the purposes of the "Senior Citizen and Disabled
26 Resident Transportation Assistance Act," P.L.1983, c.578 (C.27:25-
27 25 et seq.) shall be consolidated into the regional paratransit
28 coordinating councils. If necessary, county level subcommittees of
29 the regional paratransit coordinating councils may be established to
30 more effectively develop county plans; however, following the
31 effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
32 Legislature as this bill) county plans shall also take into account the
33 larger regional and Statewide goals of integrating paratransit service
34 and creating a more cohesive user experience under the pilot
35 program established in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
36 Legislature as this bill).

37 g. The New Jersey Transit Corporation shall utilize each
38 regional paratransit coordinating council to disseminate information
39 about the new Access Link program structure developed pursuant to
40 section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
41 as this bill) and coordinate with the council in determining the
42 operating standards required for paratransit providers to compete to
43 provide Access Link trips and when developing the system for
44 paying paratransit providers to provide regular and routine trips
45 requested through the Access Link program.

46 h. The regional paratransit coordinating councils shall also
47 advise other paratransit providers in each region and develop

1 support materials to assist other paratransit providers in adopting
2 and implementing the best practices training package developed
3 under phase three of the pilot program established pursuant to
4 paragraph (1) of subsection d. of section 5 of P.L. , c. (C.)
5 (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

6
7 7. The division, in consultation with the New Jersey Transit
8 Corporation, shall develop a framework to evaluate the efficacy of
9 the paratransit best practices training materials as well as the
10 training program. Within 180 days of the completion of phase two
11 and within 180 days of completion of phase three of the pilot
12 program, the division shall deliver a report to the Governor and the
13 Legislature. Each report shall include feedback from the agencies
14 that received training, a fiscal analysis of each agency with
15 projections on how the implementation of the training will impact
16 each agency's safety performance, average trip times, cost per trip,
17 number of trips provided, and overall impact on each agency's core
18 mission of serving people with disabilities. The division and
19 corporation shall conduct a survey of consumers of paratransit
20 services within the pilot program and shall include feedback from
21 these consumers in the report. The report shall include
22 recommendations from the division and the New Jersey Transit
23 Corporation concerning whether the pilot program should be
24 extended or made permanent, suggested changes to the program,
25 opportunities for improvement, and the potential for future savings.
26 The report shall also identify the extent to which software from the
27 pilot has been integrated into the corporation's paratransit services,
28 the analysis that determined how to execute the integration required
29 under the first part of phase three of the pilot program, and findings
30 from the division and the corporation about the overall change in
31 coordination between paratransit providers throughout the State at
32 the time of the report.

33
34 8. There is appropriated from the General Fund to The New
35 Jersey Transit Corporation up to \$4,000,000 from a portion of the
36 additional Federal Transit Administration funds granted in FY 2020
37 under the Section 5307 Urbanized Area Program, pursuant to the
38 provisions of the "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
39 Act," Pub.L.116-136, exclusively for eligible costs to develop the
40 paratransit best practices training module, including but not limited
41 to, software development and licensing costs as required pursuant to
42 section 5 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature
43 as this bill).

44
45 9. There is appropriated \$2,000,000 from the General Fund to
46 the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department of
47 Human Services, which shall be used to fund the paratransit training

1 pilot program established pursuant section 5 of
2 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

3
4 10. This act shall take effect immediately.

5
6
7 STATEMENT

8
9 This bill reforms the State's system of providing paratransit
10 services. The goal of the reforms is to better integrate the various
11 types of paratransit service currently offered in the State, allow
12 lower cost providers to provide more of the trips, and ensure that
13 best practices are adopted across the State.

14 The bill requires the New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ
15 Transit) to better integrate its paratransit services with other
16 paratransit services. Under the bill, this is achieved by requiring NJ
17 Transit to ensure that all paratransit service that it directly manages,
18 administers, or supports financially develops an open software
19 platform that will be compatible with the software used by other
20 paratransit providers. The bill requires NJ Transit to begin
21 identifying regular and recurring trips, and to develop a system
22 where other paratransit providers can complete those trips on behalf
23 of NJ Transit if the provider can meet applicable federal standards,
24 provide the trip at a lower cost, and protect customer safety. The
25 bill also requires NJ Transit to develop an Access Link program
26 structure that allows NJ Transit to realize cost savings when
27 reducing Access Link trip volumes, and to share those savings with
28 paratransit providers that meet minimum federal standards and
29 successfully compete for regular and routine trips under this new
30 system. The bill also encourages NJ Transit to move trips requested
31 under the Access Link program to other State based programs
32 entirely, especially if those trip requests are not eligible under the
33 Access Link program. This is intended to provide greater
34 integration of paratransit service across the State, so that NJ Transit
35 can allow paratransit providers to compete for regular and routine
36 Access Link trips.

37 The bill requires the establishment of a best practices pilot
38 training program for paratransit providers. The program is to be run
39 by the Division of Developmental Disabilities (division) in
40 consultation with NJ Transit and a qualified community
41 organization to be selected by the division. Under the first phase of
42 the program, the qualified community organization and NJ Transit
43 will develop a paratransit best practices training module, with final
44 approval from the division. Under the second phase, the division is
45 to select five paratransit providers, upon application, to receive
46 training in paratransit best practices under the pilot program. The
47 qualified community organization will then provide the training to

1 each of the five paratransit providers under a training contract with
2 the division. The training will include modern trip making
3 software, trip confirmation, scheduling, a mobile phone application
4 for customers, dashboard camera safety technology, as well as
5 agency-wide and individual employee training and guidance.
6 Depending upon the success of phase two of the pilot, phase three
7 will involve either revising the training module into a training
8 program that other paratransit providers can adopt without direct
9 training from the qualified community organization, or NJ Transit,
10 the division, and the qualified community organization will
11 determine some other method of integrating paratransit service so
12 that paratransit providers meeting certain standards can compete for
13 regular and routine paratransit trips. The second part of phase three
14 involves the establishment of regional paratransit coordinating
15 councils.

16 The bill creates new regional paratransit coordinating councils
17 (coordinating councils). The coordinating councils are to be located
18 within the Department of Human Services. There are to be six
19 coordinating councils divided geographically by county.
20 Membership on the coordinating councils include the division, NJ
21 Transit, NJ Transit Access Link contractors from each service
22 region, county government, county paratransit system operators,
23 several listed community organizations, and up to three additional
24 paratransit providers from each region as chosen by the division.
25 The coordinating councils are to meet at least quarterly and share
26 best practices. They are also required to establish a system to
27 exchange information between paratransit providers and eventually
28 develop open platform standards and share budget information. The
29 coordinating councils will replace the county based councils used to
30 develop county plans under the Senior Citizen and Disabled
31 Resident Transportation Assistance Program, but the councils may
32 establish county level subcommittees for this purpose. The county
33 plans also must now account for the efforts of this bill to integrate
34 Statewide paratransit service under a unified platform and
35 improving Statewide coordination across geography and across
36 agency. The coordinating councils are also to be utilized by NJ
37 Transit to develop its revised Access Link program so that the
38 paratransit providers on the council can be used as a resource when
39 allowing paratransit providers to compete for regular and routine
40 Access Link trips. Finally the coordinating councils are to serve as
41 a resource and develop materials to assist other paratransit
42 providers in achieving the integration objectives in the first part of
43 phase three of the pilot program, either through the revised training
44 module or the alternate solution developed.

45 The bill requires the division to issue a report with NJ Transit to
46 the Governor and the Legislature at the end of the pilot program
47 with information on the pilot program and a recommendation on

1 whether or not to continue the pilot program, as well as an analysis
2 of the decisions made about how to proceed with the Statewide
3 integration required in the first part of the third phase of the pilot
4 program. The division and NJ Transit are also required to survey
5 users about how their user experience is impacted by the pilot
6 program and changes to the Access Link program, and report on
7 how each have impacted paratransit users.

8 The bill provides a supplemental appropriation of federal funds
9 to NJ Transit for the cost of developing the training module and
10 related software development, and a general fund appropriation to
11 the division for the cost of the pilot's phase two training program.